

# THE BURGES'S PLEA

FOR

1505/28  
Not Taking the Oath of **ABJURATION**, In a Letter from a Citizen in Edinburgh to his Friend in the Country.

S I R,

**Y**OU desire I should write you the News, and my Sentiments about the present State of Affairs. The first I can give no Information about, further than what you and all the Country know already; And as for the second, I must beg your excuse if I keep them to my self. This is no Time for a Shop-keeper's turning Politician; especially since of late it has become dangerous to vent Truths.

But there is one Thing concerns me, and those in like Circumstances with my self, more nearly, and that I will not scruple to give you my Sentiments about.

We are informed, that next Week every Burges in *Edinburgh* must take the Oath of *Abjuration*: This indeed surprized all of us, and tho' I believe the most of them will easily Determine themselves, yet it has made all of us very uneasy.

For what Pretence in the World can be given for it; We enjoy no Posts in the Government; and if we are to Swear as a Body of *Militia*, Why are not we, who in this Case are in the Room of common Sentinels, to have the same Privilege as they, and excoemed from Swearing. One would think, that here it were sufficient that the Officers should be thus qualified.

But further, How is it possible they should expect that all the Burgeses will take an Oath, which near half of our Ministers refused as unlawful, and severals of them preached against from the Pulpit? How then, I say, can they expect that we will? Has it become now any Ways different from what it was then? Or is it less criminal for a Man to take an Oath against his Conscience, or Perjure himself now, than it was some Months ago? And this we are to swear we do willingly; when it's nottour, That we will never do so, unless compelled to it by the last *Violence*. Not to name the Inconsistency of many Parts of that Oath, with the *Principles*, *Nature* and *Constitution* of the Church of *Scotland*, and a former *Oath* and *Covenant*, the most solemn that ever was entered into, excepting the Covenant betwixt *GOD* Personally or more sensibly Present, and the *Israelites*, upon the Delivery of the Law from Mount *Sinai*.

Can any Man pretend, That the C - - - - St. G - - - - as some call him, has no Kind of Right, or any Pretence of Right whatsoever. By the Laws of God and the Laws of all Nations, a Son that was never disclaimed by the Parents, and who was never proved, nay (which is more) never attempted to be proved spurious, (but by an infamous Villain who was Pillory'd for it by that very Government to which we owe the present Settlement of the Crown) by these Laws; I say, such a Son is rightful Heir to his Parents; and, in the Case of a Hereditary Government, becomes upon his Demise, what his Father was. This is still more specious, if we consider, That by our own Confession of Faith, his Differing in Sentiments from us, nay Infidelity it self, can not void his Title with regard to us.

Now, tho' I'm convinc'd, That all this does not amount to a full legal Title, and that the present Possessor has a much better; Yet it at least offers some Kind of Right or Pretence of Right to the C: And therefore this necessarily occasions a Scruple in me as to this Oath, and so a very just Exception against its being tendered to us, or our Swearing it.

Besides I'm never sufficiently satisfied how far this Oath can be reconciled with the Revolution Principles, or the Accumulat Grounds whereon our Convention of Estates went in Forfaulting the late King *James*: For by this Oath I'm expressly bound to all the Heirs of his present Majesty being Protestants; which seems to sup-

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pose that even the highest Degrees of Tyranny and Oppression, could not henceforth be a sufficient Cause for Vacating the Right of any of this present Royal Line.

Indeed, in the Case of People that enjoy Poles, and consequently Benefits from the Government, it's a different Thing; no Body applying for them, but such as are clear, or who at least should be so, about the Lawfulness of such an Oath: But to force it down upon such People as are not so, and can have no Benefite by it, is strangely odd! Are not the Oaths of Allegiance and Assurance, which are abundantly plain and substantial, sufficient Security for a Burges's Behaviour, but he must be put upon Taking a Third, which he does not Comprehend, and can never satisfie himself about.

But to remove these and many more Scruples, we have got handed about here, a Paper said to be an intended Act of Parliament, sent down, as is said, from Above, wherein it is declared, That that Oath was not intended by the Legislator, and is not now meant otherways than as it is consistent with the *Principles* and *Doctrine* of the Church of Scotland: But if this be not a Trick to entice good well Meaning Men into a Snare, which they must immediatly be Sensible and Repent of, it's something very strange: For these Inconsistencies, which are very Numerous, are indeed a good Reason against Imposing this Oath upon the Consciences of any good Men.

But since almost every Paragraph thereof, in the plain natural and obvious Meaning of the Words, doth contain Things inconsistent with my protest Principles, and repugnant to my Conscience; and that by the same Oath I'm obliged to understand every Word thereof in the plain and obvious Sence, without any Equivocation or mental Reservation; any One's telling me that I am still left to put my own Constructions on every Article thereof, amounts to no more than an artful Instructing of me how to impose on my own Conscience, or to play the Rogue, and Juggle both with God and Man.

I remember, That they who wrote and acted boldly and conscientiously against the late evil Administration, did not scruple to affirm, That tho' the Queen's *Person* and *Character* were sacred, yet they knew no Crime in Exposing the Actings of a corrupt Ministry; And I think I may with the same Boldness, and with as much Safety, testify my Resentments of the ill Management of this.

I'll take upon me to avow it, That whoever advises these Measures, are no Friends to his Majesty; or at least very much mistake his true Interest: For did not his Majesty come over after the Demise of the late Queen, upon the most solemn Assurances and Protestations of having the Hearts, Affections and Obedience of the Generality of all his Subjects; and since He had them, Why are there such Seeds of Distrust sown? Why are Jealousies scattered? Why is our Gracious King put upon Measures which tend to perswade his Leige Subjects, that he Reigns by other Means, and by an other Title than the Possession of their Hearts and Love? And that he suspects every Man of them?

And even Granting that his Majesty suspects us all, and that some Precautions are necessary to prevent actual Rebellion; Are there not other Ways and Means to be used, but the Tendering an Oath, which so many good Men, and Loyal Subjects and worthy Ministers, are all so averse from; and in which there is a Complication of many other Matters of Consequence, which have no Relation to our Allegiance at all.

An Oath which has occasioned such Innovations in the Constitution of this City and in many other Burrows! An Oath which has created so great Differences and Dissatisfaction amongst our Clergy, and which so many of them have Preached and Argued and Writen against, and which well nigh made a Schism in our Church.

The Care of our Souls is devolved on Them, and he that has the Inspection of mine, under the Great Shepherd, has given his Testimony against it, both Publicly and in Private, to my through Conviction.

Let others do as they have a Mind, I am resolved to suffer Persecution for Righteousness Sake, (if they that are at the Helm of Affairs, should engage our Sovereign in such Measures) rather than wound my Conscience; For Loyalty and Obedience are due to my Sovereign, but my Conscience is GOD's only; It's His Deputy in my Breast, and if my Conscience condemn me, GOD, who is greater than my Conscience, will condemn me also.



TOURS, &c.